

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

High school is a melting pot of all sorts of people. Many fit in naturally. But, the most interesting ones, sometimes, are those who don't walk the "normal" path. In the novel, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, Charlie is most definitely an outsider. He doesn't fit and he knows it. The movie of the same name, directed by Stephen Chbosky, does a decent job bringing Charlie's life into picture. Overall, the book is far more superior to the movie because it gives more in depth knowledge on every possible thing going on in Charlie's mind unlike the movie.

The story begins with "Dear Friend" followed by the story of the tragic death of Charlie's best friend due to suicide. Charlie, the eponymous "wallflower" starts his journals writing to an unknown friend because he heard they would listen. Starting high school alone causes Charlie to write more actively until he gained trust from his English teacher, who saw Charlie's gift in literature, and "Nobody" who is Patrick, a senior who has shop class with Charlie. As the diary entries unfold you begin to see more and more of Patrick and his step-sister Sam who Charlie develops a crush on. Later on in the school year Charlie overcomes his anxiety with Patrick and Sam by his side. At the end of the novel Charlie tells the truth about his Aunt Helen and what she did to him. At the end he swore he was infinite and ended his last entry with "Love Always, Charlie." The movie, much like the novel, starts off with the death of Charlie's best friend, but it is stepped around and told in a slightly different manner than that of the novel.

Unlike like the book, the movie is told through Charlie's direct take on life and not through his diary entries. The movie leaves out Charlie's older brother who is definitely more of a prominent character in the novel. In the film the first day Charlie and Patrick meet, Patrick is given the nickname "Nothing". In the novel Patrick had already been assigned this nickname for some time before he met Charlie. The film also left out many small tidbits of information given in the book, like when Charlie was hit by his father and his sister's abortion she has. The last scene of the movie

ended with Charlie, Patrick and Sam going through the tunnel because they had found a song they had played in past. Unfortunately, in the novel they never find the song of the past, but they too were infinite.

The plot in the novel is far superior to that of the movie. Despite the very untraditional sequence of the novel and how its plot is laid out through diaries, it still has a multitude of chronological plot points. From little tidbits of information to plenty more scenes the book by far trumps the movie. The book starts off by right away getting to the details of Michael's death and elaborating on it unlike in the movie where the stepped around. The novel also gives a point of view on Charlie's Aunt Helen that is nearly not reached in the movie. The book sheds light on Charlie's relationship with his aunt and how she passed and later on in the novel what she did to him as a child. Charlie and his aunt's relationship is not the only duo they bypassed in the movie. Charlie and his English teacher's bond was totally minimized in the movie as well. The novel gave a firsthand glance on what it was like to be an outsider in the shoes of Charlie and the movie did not do justice to that as much. The movie did do a very nice job on showing the events in order of the novel and giving us faces to our characters; however, overall, the book's plot was better in the end.

The characters in the novel were hands down more adequately in depth. The novel gives us plenty more background on each of the characters unlike the the movie. However, the movie does give us something that the novel cannot give us, a visual, and a face to look at of each of the characters. The movie did an excellent job at casting people that favor the novel's interpretation of what this people would look like and how they would act, but it just left out too many minor details. With the backgrounds given in the novel you were able to imagine what Charlie, Patrick or Sam might look like, but the movie brought those characters to life. One major difference in the novel versus the movie is how they portrayed Charlie's sisters boyfriend. In the novel the boyfriend was unnamed, but Charlie told the audience that he was characterized by his ponytail. In the movie they

gave the boyfriend the name Ponytail Derek to bring some comedy into this hard hitting expo on high school. The novel picked up on the details of the characters that the movie just could not be up to par with, making the novel far more detailed and better in portraying the characters. Movies show you their interpretation of the what characters should be and the novel lets you to decide who you want them to be.

Over the years *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky has endured lots of praise and recognition from reviewers and others for his expo on high school and how being an outsider may not be a bad thing. Nic, a reviewer from The Guardian stated that he found it very difficult to find anything he did not like about the novel (par.3). Nic from The Guardian also later shared that “*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a gift, and to Stephan Chbosky I will always be grateful.” Many reviewer also put in hard hitting statements of what *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is all about. Kate Pavao, a reviewer for Common Sense Media shared that this novel was a controversial coming-of-age classic (par.1). Similarly, the movie reviews received the same praise. Manohla Dargis from *NYTimes* commented in her review a blurb on the plot stating that movie tracks the ups and downs and playlists of a high school freshman (par.1). Peter Travers, a reviewer from *The Rolling Stone* also shared his thoughts on the movie by saying, “*Perks* deserves points for going beyond the typical coming-of-age drivel aimed at teens” (par. 7).

Similar to the reviews on the plot, reviewers focusing on *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* seemed to really enjoy and not have a negative thought to say on the characterization of the novel and movie. Peter Travers from *The Rolling Stone* said that Charlie, the main character, is smart but socially inept freshman in the movie (par. 3). Peter also stated in his movie review that, “Miller brings stinging humor and surprising tenderness to Patrick, two qualities Charlie needs badly” (par. 6). Patrick, Charlie’s new best friend is depicted by having qualities that Charlie is desperately lacking as said in the review. In regards to Charlie and Patrick, Manohla Dargis from *NYTimes* stated

that these two and several others are self-identified nonconformists (par. 2). The novel's characterization was also reviewed by several people and unlike the movie didn't have a set "actor and actress" in mind. Nic, a review from The Guardian said, "The female characters are numerous and as well developed as their male counterparts" (par. 3). Nic also said that Charlie's deteriorating mental health is noticed through by having him see sadness wherever he goes (par. 3). Kate Pavao from Common Sense Media stated that here's lots of mature content here (par. 3). The characters were classified as mature and many reviewers would agree upon that.

The novel is by far better than the movie for many different reasons. Mainly, the novel served as a reservoir of information to give the reader a strong background which the movie just seemed to lack. I highly recommend reading this novel if anything. The movie was decent, but it does not compare to the novel in the slightest. Sometimes being the outsider isn't a bad thing.

Works Cited

- Chbosky, Stephen. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Auckland, N.Z.: Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, 2014. Print.
- Dargis, Manohla. "'The Perks of Being a Wallflower,' Dir. Stephen Chbosky." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, 20 Sept. 2012. Web. 03 May 2017.
<[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/21/movies/the-perks-of-being-a-wallflower-directed-by stephen-chbosky.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/21/movies/the-perks-of-being-a-wallflower-directed-by-stephen-chbosky.html)>.
- Nic, and *Children's Books Site Teen Reviewer*. "The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky – Review." *The Guardian*. *Guardian News and Media*, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 03 May 2017.
<<https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2015/aug/07/the-perks-of-being-a-wallflower-stephen-chbosky-review>>.
- Pavao, Kate. "The Perks of Being a Wallflower." *Book Review*. *Common Sense Media*, 19 July 2011. Web. 03 May 2017. <<https://www.common sense media.org/book-reviews/the-perks-of-being-a-wallflower#>>.
- The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Dir. Stephen Chbosky. Summit Inc/Lionsgate, 2013. DVD.
- Travers, Peter. "The Perks of Being a Wallflower." *Rolling Stone*. 20 Sept. 2012. Web. 03 May 2017.
<<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/the-perks-of-being-a-wallflower-20120920>>.